United Nations A/56/PV.83

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

83rd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 11 December 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 23

Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal

Draft resolution (A/56/L.47)

Mr. Hybl (United States of America): Building a peaceful and better world is the underlying principle of the United Nations Charter. Usually the Organization does this by considering peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian assistance. Today we are considering how to build a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal.

Through sport one learns fair play, mutual understanding, solidarity and friendship. These are virtues that the United Nations strives to embody in its work and as an example to the world community. Today, the Assembly can support the ideal of teaching the youth of the world not about sport, but to use sport to promote peace and the well-being of society.

At its forty-eighth session in 1993, the Assembly responded to the appeal of the International Olympic Committee, which revived in the modern era the ancient tradition of the "Olympic Truce". Commencing in the seventh century BC, the Olympic Truce was established as a principle of inter-State relations for ensuring the safe passage and participation of all concerned to Olympia for the Olympic Games.

The Assembly also proclaimed the year 1994 as the International Year of Sport and the Olympic Ideal on the occasion of the centenary of the International Olympic Committee, which was founded in 1894. Its revival was reaffirmed by the Assembly at its forty-ninth session prior to the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, the Centennial Games, hosted by our country; again at its fifty-first session on the occasion of the Olympic Winter Games in Nagano, Japan; and then again in 1999 prior to the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in Sydney, Australia. Since 1994, various Presidents of the Assembly and Secretaries-General of the United Nations have made solemn appeals to the world community to continue this tradition.

Most recently, the historic Final Declaration of the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 included an appeal to observe the Olympic Truce and to support the International Olympic Committee in its efforts to promote peace and human understanding through sport and the Olympic ideal.

It gives my delegation great pleasure that the United States is the host of the XIX Olympic Winter Games, to be held in Salt Lake City, Utah, from 8 to 24 February 2002. I am particularly pleased, not only because I am a member of the United States delegation to the fifty-sixth session of the Assembly, but also because I am a member of the International Olympic Committee and have served as President of the United

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States Olympic Committee during Olympic Games. I would like to note that there are at least several Olympians in this great Hall today and we certainly appreciate their presence. They continue to apply the lessons learned through athletic competition for promoting a peaceful and better world.

Salt Lake's opening ceremonies are a mere 59 days from today. Since the revival of the modern Olympic Games in 1896 in Athens, Greece, this is the eighth time that the United States will have served as host country and we invite the world to our doorstep for what we feel will be the best Winter Games ever. These will be the first Games of the new century and of the new millennium. Athletes from 80 nations, the largest number ever to participate in the Olympic Winter Games, will process in the opening ceremonies and they will pledge their honour to uphold the values of fair play and honest competition. Once again, those somewhat simple but inspiring acts will reinforce the scope and power of the Olympic movement and, for the first time, link athletes of the twenty-first century with those of ancient Greece. The Salt Lake Organizing Committee and all those concerned, including over 27,000 volunteers in Utah, are promising to do their best to ensure the success of this world festival of winter sport.

Building on the traditions established by the International Olympic Committee, my country, as host of the next Games, today introduces in plenary draft resolution A/56/L.47, "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal". We appreciate the fact that this Olympic relay team has 161 sponsors. I should like to read out the names of the countries that have been added to the list of sponsors since yesterday: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Brazil, Bulgaria, the Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Grenada, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Building upon the Assembly's support for this initiative began in 1993. The United Nations and the International Olympic Committee have launched joint projects in such fields as development, humanitarian assistance, health promotion, education, women, eradication of poverty and the fights against HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and juvenile delinquency. For example, the Olympic Solidarity Fund established by the International Olympic Committee will spend over $200 million between 2001 and 2004 for the development of sport scholarships for underprivileged athletes in developing countries. The World Anti-Doping Agency was initiated by the International Olympic Committee and is composed of government representatives and sport movement leaders.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General hosted the recently established International Olympic Truce Foundation last May at Headquarters so as to promote continued cooperation. I am pleased to recall that the United States Senate subsequently passed a resolution supporting the purposes of that Foundation and that Mr. Han Seung-soo, in his capacity as President of the Assembly, is a member of its voluntary Board of Directors.

Let me close by expressing my sincere thanks to the International Olympic Committee for organizing a world conference on sport and Olympic volunteerism last month in New York City as a gesture of solidarity in the framework of the United Nations current International Year of Volunteers. As the 27,000 volunteers in Salt Lake will demonstrate in a few weeks, the Olympic movement happens only because of the spirit of volunteerism and goodwill. In that same goodwill, my delegation today welcomes the opportunity before this great gathering to draw the world's attention to the tradition of the Olympic Truce on the eve of the Games. Therefore, on behalf of the host country of both these Games and of the United Nations, the United States looks forward to welcoming the athletes of the world for the XIX Olympic Winter Games.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Olympic spirit, initiated more than 2,000 years ago, is a distillation of humanity's effort to seek self-development and fulfilment. Over this long period, the Olympic ideal has gradually developed into a symbol

of mankind's aspiration for and pursuit of a peaceful and better world, encouraging us to overcome difficulties and to achieve progress upon progress.

Despite the two tragic World Wars, people's aspiration for peace and their pursuit of the Olympic ideal have never wavered since Mr. Pierre de Coubertin initiated the modern Olympic games at the end of the nineteenth century. The establishment of the United Nations, the purposes and principles of its Charter, and the efforts it has made to achieve world peace and common economic development have also contributed in no small way to promoting the development of the Olympic Games.

Today mankind has already stepped into the twenty-first century. The nations of the world should continue to adhere to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, vigorously promote the Olympic spirit, seek peaceful solutions to international disputes and regional conflicts, enhance understanding and friendship among civilizations through dialogue and exchange, and work for continuous, global, social and economic development through cooperation. Whether they live in the East or the West, the North or the South, the common aspiration of people all over the world today is that the twenty-first century will be a new century marked by human development and progress.

The terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September constituted a fundamental violation of the Olympic ideal as well as a serious challenge to human civilization. The international community should strengthen its cooperation against terrorism, fight it in all its forms and strive to eradicate its roots.

The nineteenth Winter Olympic Games will be held at Salt Lake City in the United States in February next year. The host country and the International Olympic Committee have carried out much careful and thoughtful preparatory work in this regard. We hope that the international community can work together to ensure that the Games will be a complete success.

On 13 July this year, the city of Beijing was awarded the opportunity to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. The world has seen the love and respect of the ancient Oriental civilization for the Olympic spirit as well as its aspiration for and pursuit of world peace, friendship and development. Once again we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to friends from countries around the world, as well as the International Olympic Committee, for having supported us in this effort. We believe that holding the Olympic Games in China, a country with a 5,000-year history, will not only represent the world's full recognition of China's great achievements since its reform and opening-up policy, but also provide a good opportunity for exchange between Oriental and Occidental civilizations. China will prove through real action that Beijing can give the world an outstanding Olympic Games.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Every two years since the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, in 1993, the Principality of Monaco has participated with interest in the debate on the item "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal".

We are particularly interested in the debate this year because of the excellent report of the Secretary-General, which encourages the work carried out by the Organization in collaboration with the International Olympic Committee, and also because of the final and very instructive report on the Olympic movement, which stresses the many interesting and important initiatives taken by the Committee itself and by National Committees with regard to the item now before us.

Reading the two reports makes us more aware of the irreplaceable role of sporting events in bringing people together and in fostering greater understanding among young people who sometimes come from vastly different and far-flung corners of the world. Last year, the International Olympic Committee organized six round tables — in Athens, Nairobi, San José, Lomé, Singapore and Rome — on the topic of sport for a culture of peace and respect for the Olympic Truce. The meetings brought together members of the National Olympic Committees, including representatives of countries in conflict and United Nations experts. The meetings were edifying and their conclusions very encouraging. We noted, for example, a real desire to promote the spirit of fair play, tolerance and solidarity at all levels in sporting competitions.

Since 1968 Monaco has been the headquarters for the International Association for Non-Violent Sport, which encourages the strengthening of sport's educative and cultural functions as well as promoting the fight against drug abuse, chauvinism and cheating, all of which are deeply contrary to the Olympic spirit.

It is important to emphasize some of the many useful recommendations made at the round tables, some of which are directed specifically at United Nations programmes and specialized agencies. They call for greater support for the development of sport through social and community projects to help young people and those in rural areas. We urge follow-up on these recommendations.

In this spirit, the Principality of Monaco decided to make a bilateral financial contribution for the construction of sport stadiums in the Republic of El Salvador, with a view to the upcoming Central American Games. After the work is done, the stadiums will be available to schools and social and community organizations for young people in difficult circumstances. We welcome the many activities organized for the International Year for the Culture of Peace by the International Olympic Committee, the Organization of African Unity and many National Olympic Committees. These activities show clearly that there is a lively interest throughout the world in promoting peace and the Olympic ideal. This is very encouraging and gives us hope for the future.

Sporting activities certainly contribute to building a better organized and more peaceful world at the collective and individual levels. This was a point made by the Nobel Committee when it announced that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001 would go to the United Nations and its Secretary-General; the award ceremony took place yesterday. On behalf of the highest authorities and the people of Monaco, I would like to encourage and warmly congratulate the two laureates. We believe that the combined choice of the Organization and the Secretary-General shows without a doubt that the integration of the collective and the individual is absolutely fundamental to success in all human endeavours. Sports are certainly one of the most noteworthy, strongest and most convincing symbols of this essential duality.

On behalf of our Government, our athletes and our sports figures, I would like to commend the exceptional performance of Mr. Juan Antonio Samaranch, who retired this summer as President of the International Olympic Committee. He led the movement from success to success for many years and is widely recognized throughout the world.

We believe that Mr. Samaranch's successor, Mr. Jacques Rogge, who was elected in Moscow last July as President of the International Olympic Committee, will be able to take over very successfully from his predecessor. The entire sporting world knows him well and has without hesitation placed its total faith in him. He has certainly abundantly deserved that trust. We wish him every success and take this opportunity to assure him of the cooperation of the Principality of Monaco and its leaders in successfully carrying out his very important task.

At the twelfth Sportel, the international encounter of sports and television recently held in Monaco, we had an opportunity to welcome Mr. Rogge. We also welcomed him to Monaco last 13 November, when we hosted the General Assembly of the European Olympic Committee. Monaco's leaders and its entire population greatly appreciated his visit.

The Principality of Monaco is a country where sports are very highly regarded. The Government devotes significant resources to promoting physical education and sporting activities, beginning by involving young people in school athletics and, of course, in extra-curricular sports. In addition, there are many major international sporting events in Monaco, such as the Formula One Grand Prix, the Monte Carlo Automobile Rally, tennis tournaments and the Herculis, which is an annual event that brings together the best athletes from numerous sporting realms to take part in various events, including sailing — both motorized and wind-sailing — golf and swimming, as well as soccer, handball, volley ball and even pétanque.

Some of those events have a humanitarian aspect, such as the one that took place last 3 October on the initiative of Mr. Mike Powers, organizer of the Big 3 Records Golf Tournament. The Tournament had been cancelled because it was to be held just after the 11 September tragedy — which took place exactly three months ago today. The Tournament was turned into charity event that raised a large sum of money at an auction for the families of the firefighters, police officers and rescue workers of the City of New York who were victims of that attack. His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Chairman of the delegation of Monaco to the General Assembly and a member of the International Olympic Committee, handed the proceeds over to the Mayor of New York on 23 October.

Moreover, numerous friendly sporting events are held every year in Monaco whose proceeds go to charities or charitable works. In this regard, and in

response to the appeal made by President Bush, I wish to say that tribute is paying paid today in Monaco to the memory of the victims of that horrible attack. The national anthems of the United States and Monaco will be played at that ceremony of prayer and remembrance. Likewise, in recalling such a terrible and brutal attack, we cannot fail to remember that terrorism has also taken a heavy toll on the Olympic Movement, namely, at the sadly recalled Munich Olympics.

As we all know, in a few weeks' time the United States will host the nineteenth Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City. We hope that the games, which will be held in the wounded land of America, will be a historic success. On that occasion, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, the Secretary-General, persons associated with the President of the International Olympic Committee, and many other world personalities will launch a universal appeal for respect for the Olympic Truce. We wholeheartedly support that appeal.

We firmly believe that today, when new causes of concern for the international community are joining the many age-old conflicts, the joint initiative of the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee — which has been renewed every two years for 28 years now — represents an opportunity for those involved in conflict to talk, to begin or relaunch dialogue, and to reject sterile distrust of one another. Just a few weeks' respite in fighting have often been used to begin neutral, balanced humanitarian involvement to enable envoys to meet with belligerents to try to find solutions to their disputes. The delegation of Monaco fully supports and co-sponsors the draft resolution introduced by the delegation of the United States on this matter.

At the Millennium Summit, our heads of State and Government, or their high-level representatives, adopted a major moral and ethical Declaration of great significance in which they called on all Member States, individually and collectively, to observe the Olympic Truce now and in the future and to support the efforts of the International Olympic Committee to promote peace and understanding among people.

The new millennium, which so many men and women had hoped would be one of peace and conviviality, is today one of doubt and pessimism. If doubt is a tribute to hope, then the pessimism to which everything today leads us is but a fleeting feeling, a feeling that could be wiped out by a little spark of hope. The Olympic Truce decreed for the nineteenth Winter Games can be that spark of hope. We must believe that, and it should fill us with optimism and hope.

Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus): I would like, at the outset, to express the satisfaction of my delegation at the great number of countries that have sponsored the present draft resolution. This is a clear message of the importance that the international community places on the Olympic ideal. The great challenge now is to take the first practical steps towards turning the observance of the Olympic Truce into a reality.

The Olympic ideal and Truce are expressions of the yearning of mankind for peace, understanding and reconciliation, and for the noble notion of distinction based on honest competition. In the search for excellence every athlete is equal, and victory is the result of ability, training, hard work and perseverance. Discrimination with regard to a country or a person on the grounds of race, religion, politics, sex or otherwise is incompatible with the Olympic spirit. It is important to strengthen adherence to Olympic ethics, especially the need to conduct the Games in a fair way. In that context, the efforts against the use of prohibited anabolic and other drugs are to be commended.

Since its independence, Cyprus, a small country, has followed an active foreign policy based on the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, which coincide with, and fully adhere to, the Olympic ideal. It is now ever more imperative that the spirit of freedom and tolerance, as exemplified by the very essence of the Olympic ideal, be greatly disseminated through the planet; for in these turbulent times following the abhorrent terrorist acts of 11 September, humanity should look to the idea of the Olympic spirit and the Olympic Truce as an alternative to war, destruction and the assault on civilization, which is the goal of terrorism.

The latest manifestation of our determination to become a bridge of peace in our sensitive region in the Eastern Mediterranean, and a homeland of harmony and understanding for all communities living on the island, is the proposal of President Clerides for the demilitarization of Cyprus. On this solemn occasion, we renew our appeal for the acceptance of this proposal and express our hope for a just and lasting settlement in accordance with United Nations resolutions, so that

Cyprus can participate in the next Olympics as a reunited and peaceful State, with a team that will include the best Cypriot athletes, irrespective of their background.

The people of Cyprus were immensely satisfied with the decision of the International Olympic Committee concerning the hosting of the 2004 Olympic Games in Greece, the birthplace of the Olympic movement, and we are particularly pleased at the quick pace of preparations for their realization. We look forward to a successful Athens 2004 and are certain that the Olympic ideal will be fulfilled, thus opening a new chapter in the history of the Olympic movement. We also wish every success to the Winter Games in Salt Lake City and express our appreciation to the Organizing Committee.

I would like in conclusion to express our appreciation for the great efforts of the International Olympic Committee to imbue youth with these ideals, which are the guarantee of a better and more humane world.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): The Government of Israel is proud to lend its support to the draft resolution entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal".

Israel is of the view that athletic competition, undertaken in a spirit of mutual respect, fairness, and good sportsmanship, is an ideal way to foster goodwill and good relations between peoples. The values of sports are international values that transcend national boundaries and provide a medium through which diverse peoples can interact and promote greater understanding of one another.

The Olympic Games, as the world's premier sporting event, have long been one of the primary meeting points for nations divided by politics or geography. In this respect we support the observance of the Olympic Truce as an expression of our common yearning for peace and reconciliation, and we hope that all Member States will join together in ensuring that peace and security prevail for the duration of the Games.

In our own region we have tried to harness the power of sport to forge relationships and build bridges across the dark waters of conflict. We hope that these types of competitions will continue to develop and expand in future.

Israel has a long history of involvement in international athletic competition. Every four years, thousands of athletes from all over the world converge on the State of Israel for the Maccabiah Games, which bear the name and spirit of the Maccabim, whose heritage the Jewish people celebrate at this time, during Hanukkah, the festival of light. This quadrennial event, which dates back to 1932, embodies the best of Jewish culture and athletics and is an unforgettable experience for participants and spectators alike.

For the people of Israel, the idea of the Olympic Games cannot be separated from the memory of the horrific act of terrorist murder that tarnished the 1972 Munich Games. At those Games, gunmen from the terrorist group Black September broke into the Olympic Village disguised as athletes and killed 11 Israeli athletes and coaches.

This disgraceful act of terrorism and murder is unprecedented in the annals of Olympic history and is the very antithesis of the Olympic ideal. Rather than transcending politics and conflict, the Games were used as a vehicle for the expression of hatred and the perpetration of murder. This blemish on the history of the Games must not be forgotten as we strive to ensure that future Olympic events serve to broaden understanding, tolerance, respect and peace.

Israel reaffirms its support for the noble objectives of this draft resolution and for the observance of the Olympic Truce. The Olympic Games is one of the world's only truly global events and, as such, presents us with an extraordinary opportunity to focus the world's attention and utilize the goodwill that the Games inspire to build a more peaceful and more harmonious world.

Mr. Gounaris (Greece): It is a great honour for me to take the floor on the draft resolution presented today in the plenary under agenda item 23, entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal".

The draft resolution, introduced by the United States, the country hosting the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, calls on all Member States to promote the Olympic ideal, to observe the Olympic Truce and to revive the ancient Greek tradition of *ekecheiria*, which dates back to the ninth century BC

The term *ekecheiria*, which in ancient Greek literally means "holding hands", indicates the

suspension of hostilities and the creation of appropriate conditions to allow athletes participating in the Olympic Games, as well as their relatives and thousands of ordinary pilgrims, to travel, unobstructed by fear, to attend the legendary Games in peace, and then return to their hometowns in safety and security.

The purpose of the Olympic Truce movement is more far-reaching. It could become a positive factor in international rapprochement and a useful tool for diplomacy. In every nation and society, culture and religion, the Olympic Games are recognized as the major sporting event of our world, a unique sports and cultural festivity that should promote the values we wish to cherish in our global village.

In this context, we welcome the common declaration of Pope John Paul II and His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece:

> "We are pleased to add our voice to the many voices around the world which have expressed the hope that, on the occasion of the Olympic Games to be held in Greece in the year 2004, the ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic Truce will be revived, according to which all wars had to stop, and terrorism and violence had to cease."

Let me remind the Assembly that the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted in New York in September 2000 by more than 150 heads of State and Government, included a paragraph on the promotion of peace and mutual comprehension of the Olympic Truce.

In July 2000, International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch and the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. George Papandreou, inaugurated the Athens International Olympic Truce Centre. The Centre, in full compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions, is an ambitious undertaking by the International Olympic Committee, in cooperation with the Greek Government, to promote an international ceasefire during the Olympics, thus allowing the building of bridges among rivals.

Greece will have the distinct honour of hosting the 2004 Summer Olympics. The return of the Olympic Games in 2004 to Greece, their ancient home, more than a century after their revival in 1896, provides an opportunity to enrich the modern Olympics by restoring some of the forgotten ideals of ancient Greece. Our endeavours aspire to refocus on the athlete as the centre of our attention and the measure of our success. In a contemporary manner, we aim to organize, in the most efficient and secure way, the 2004 Olympic Games in the authentic traditions and with the original values embodied in the Olympic ideal.

Furthermore, we aspire to promote a cultural Olympiad — a cultural event of a global scale that is designed to link sport with culture and hopes to send a strong message for a culture of civilizations, in order to act as a platform for universal cooperation.

In our bid, we pledged to help the revival of the Olympic Truce, which in our times would serve to promote dialogue, reconciliation and the search for durable solutions to conflicts around the world. In no other year could this message be more timely. We aim to emphasize the importance of the issues of dialogue, tolerance, mutual understanding, respect and cooperation between cultures, religions and civilizations. This is our everyday challenge under the Charter of the United Nations: to promote those issues that unite us and to practise dialogue on those who stand between us. We need to open ways of communication and to promote dialogue among those who do not already practise it.

I would like to express our appreciation to the mission of the United States for introducing this draft resolution and to extend our heartfelt thanks to the delegations that sponsored it. The message of peace and reconciliation originating in this draft resolution will give us, I am sure, hope and vision towards our common goals.

Mr. Requiejo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Sport and the Olympic ideal undoubtedly contribute to better understanding and mutual comprehension, as well as to the development and strengthening of friendship and fraternity among peoples, which are indispensable to the promotion of peace, cooperation among nations and the harmonious development of mankind.

In this respect, we attach special importance to the observance of the Olympic Truce for the cessation of all hostilities during the Olympic Games and to the search, through diplomatic solutions, for a peaceful settlement of international disputes, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. This is the basis for the creation, through sport and the Olympic ideal, of a better world in which peace

prevails. However, there are many factors today that run counter to that objective.

The growing negative effects of neoliberal globalization can also be felt today in the area of sport, where the gap between rich and poor has widened. One figure suffices to confirm that inequality: in the most recent Olympic Games, held in 2000, a mere seven countries from the first world took 50 per cent of the medals to be won.

We are not surprised by this, since sport requires the financial resources to create the infrastructure necessary to its development and since the developing countries do not have such resources. The meagre resources available to them today must be allocated to the eradication of poverty, hunger, poor health conditions and many other problems that violate the most fundamental human rights: the right to life and the right to development.

Furthermore, it is regrettable that some of those medals are won by talented athletes from countries that have hardly any sports installations and trainers or resources for the development of sport and that many of these athletes have no alternative but to take the path of professional and profit-making sport and to compete under other flags. The delegation of Cuba denounces this practice, which, unfortunately, is growing day by day. At the same time, we call on the international sports federations to take the measures necessary to curb the buying and selling of sporting talents, which corrupt and tarnish the purity of sport and damage the Olympic ideal that we wish to promote. It is also necessary to encourage the honesty and impartiality of sports officials and judges and to deem any case of corruption to be a grave offence against the Olympic spirit.

Another violation of the Olympic ideal is represented by the colossal sums of money that today surround the competition to host Olympic Games and, essentially, to organize Olympiads. Hosting the Olympics must also be a right enjoyed by the poor countries and not the exclusive monopoly of the super-rich. In that respect, Cuba reiterates its aspiration to host some Olympic Games in the near future. Our sporting record justifies that aspiration.

Our small country, in spite of the criminal blockade that has been imposed on us for 42 years by the United States, has begun this century with thousands of sports installations used by 1.5 million citizens systematically practising sports or physical exercise under specialist guidance: by over 2 million children, teenagers and young students with physical education and sports teachers; and by men and women of the third age, pregnant women and other categories of citizens for whom sport or physical exercise means health and longer life.

In Cuba, the teaching of sport is free of charge, making a reality of our aspiration of guaranteeing sport as a right of the people. Cuba is also working to strengthen sport in the countries of the third world, as demonstrated in the inauguration this year of the International School of Physical Education and Sport in Havana, where young people from over 50 countries of the South are studying today to graduate as qualified professionals in various branches of sport. We are also pleased to affirm that almost 8,000 sports specialists and trainers from Cuba have provided services in dozens of countries whose athletes have on occasion competed with and won competitions against our own athletes.

The delegation of Cuba joins in the consensus on the draft resolution entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal" because we consider it to be an acceptable and useful text whose contents we entirely support and endorse. However, the Cuban delegation is not a sponsor, as it has been in the past, because we believe that, although it is a positive text, it represents a step backward from resolution 54/34, adopted by consensus with the same objective in 1999.

As Cuba sees it, the Olympic Truce calls "for all hostilities to cease during the Games", as affirmed in the second preambular paragraph of that resolution. This indispensable concept has been eliminated from the draft resolution now before the General Assembly.

The Cuban delegation also regrets the elimination of the contents of operative paragraph 2 of resolution 54/34, in which Member States are urged

> "to take the initiative to abide by the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively, and to pursue, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of all international conflicts through diplomatic solutions".

This concept is extremely important in a world in which international conflicts are proliferating and in which peace is increasingly threatened.

As President Fidel Castro has said, sport represents well-being, quality of life, health, happiness and honour for peoples, and is perhaps the most efficient instrument to combat criminal tendencies, drugs and the many other vices that afflict modern societies.

Globalization in the area of sport must be the globalization of cooperation, respect and equity, not the globalization of injustices and inequalities. On that basis, we will be able to advance towards the true Olympic ideal.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus welcomes the draft resolution introduced by the United States under the item "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal". Debate on this topic in the General Assembly is a unique opportunity for the United Nations to use the full potential of the international community in maintaining international peace and security by mobilizing sport's resources to achieve its main goal — saving current and succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

From ancient times, sport and the Olympic ideal have been an inherent part of peace and progress. We are convinced that this age-old tradition must be preserved and strengthened in the twenty-first century. The Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000 by our heads of State and Government, set forth clearly the following goal:

> "to observe the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively, now and in the future, and to support the International Olympic Committee in its efforts to promote peace and human understanding through sport and the Olympic Ideal". (*resolution 55/2, para. 10*)

In this context, the Republic of Belarus supports coordination by the International Olympic Committee and the Secretary-General's Adviser on Sports for Development and Peace so that sport can be used to reconcile communities in conflict or post-conflict situations, and can be considered an integral part of the general process of economic and social development and the promotion of the culture of peace and harmony, particularly among young people. All United Nations programmes focused on this goal will receive the Belarus Government's full support and cooperation.

Belarus, which recently became a fully integrated member of the international community, views the social function of sports and physical culture as an integral part of the process of creating our nation's statehood. We also see it as a means of maintaining friendly relations and partnerships with all other countries of the world. Sport and physical culture are one of the main policy priorities of Belarus, because they help solve social problems, particularly in providing health care for children, teenagers, students and all other citizens of our country.

Belarus has a well-established sports infrastructure comprising 225 stadiums, 24 sports centres, 222 swimming pools, 4,687 sports clubs, many Olympic training centres, sports palaces, tennis courts, ice-sport palaces and more than 9,000 open sports courts. Belarus is a small country, but many of our people practise sports of all kinds, with nearly 8 per cent of our overall population involved in some sport.

During the 1997-2000 Olympic cycle, sports teams from Belarus won 247 Olympic medals, including 53 gold medals. At the XXVII Olympic Games, in Sydney, Belarus won 3 gold, 3 silver and 11 bronze medals, ranking fifteenth among all teams participating in the Games. The Belarus gymnastics team won a gold medal in the recent World Championships in Brussels, Belgium.

Belarus is currently a member of the Committee for the Development of Sport of the Council of Europe and the Executive Committee of the European Sports Conference, and was elected to the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The members of our National Olympic Committee represent Belarus in the European Olympic Committees Association, the European Non-Governmental Sports Organization and the National Olympic Committees Association of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Recently, the Republic of Belarus initiated the adoption of recommendations to facilitate a visa regime for sport delegations, including the idea of participation in large-scale sporting events in Europe on a non-visa basis. Following a UNESCO initiative, Belarus has put forth a recommendation on the topic "Physical education and sports as a means of social

development". In addition, since Belarus is active in the fields of physical culture, sport and the drafting of relevant legislation, we have in place the necessary framework for the establishment of our national physical education and sports regime.

The global challenges and threats facing humankind today require a global and comprehensive response. We must explore all means available to the international community to achieve peace, and sport is a powerful means of helping us towards that goal. The Olympic Games in Sydney, at the threshold of the new millennium, reaffirmed the very close interdependence between sports and peace, which is of particular importance for us today and in the future. The Republic of Belarus will do its utmost to strengthen this relationship.

Ms. Vassallo (Malta): It is an honour for my delegation to address the Assembly on agenda item 23, entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal".

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the United States for introducing this year's draft resolution as host of the 2002 Winter Olympics, to be held in Salt Lake City. In reaffirming our support for the spirit of this draft resolution, we acknowledge with pleasure the high number of sponsorships it has received.

Apart from being a spectacle of competitive sport, skill and stamina, the Olympic Games are rich in symbolic significance that is as relevant today as it was centuries ago in ancient Greece. Let us recall that the Games owe their origins to a treaty which gave rise to the concept of the sacred truce, under which conflicts in the Greek world came to a halt throughout the duration of the Games.

In accordance with the Millennium Declaration, my delegation invites Member States

> "to observe the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively, now and in the future, and to support the International Olympic Committee in its efforts to promote peace and human understanding through sport and the Olympic ideal". (ibid.)

The Olympic Games might be considered a diplomatic tool which enhances the efforts of the United Nations in the promotion of peace. The Games involve the same search as that of the Organization — for cooperation, understanding and fruitful interaction — which leads to dialogue and initiatives on a large number of issues. Gone are the days when countries believed, for whatever reason, that they had to boycott the Games. Today, all countries participate and compete side by side. It was gratifying to watch the athletes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea marching together during the Australian Games in 2000.

My delegation firmly believes that sport plays a definite, interactive role in the promotion of a better and more peaceful world. Interaction among athletes leads to enhanced understanding among cultures and the promotion of healthy lifestyles in younger generations, as well as the broader realization of the Olympic ideal.

My delegation is heartened by the joint endeavours which have emerged between the International Olympic Committee and the United Nations.

The organization of the Games further emphasizes the significance of addressing issues of development, the protection of the environment, education, the eradication of poverty and the fight against HIV/AIDS, as well as the fight against drug abuse, violence and juvenile delinquency, all of which feature on the United Nations agenda.

The Olympic Games present younger generations with role models who promote healthy lifestyles. Some athletes are representatives of ethnic minorities; their participation is an important step towards the acceptance of ethnic minorities and the acknowledgement of their contribution to their countries. The participation of these athletes goes beyond physical strength and performance; it also symbolizes courage and the intrinsic universal value of all peoples and all cultures.

The Olympic Truce basically signifies the cessation of belligerence among countries and peoples in armed conflict for at least the duration of the Games. The United Nations has the obligation of furthering this concept, leading to a more proactive stance. Through the promotion of a better understanding among nations, the international community can contribute towards the elimination of the scourge of war.

The Olympic Games promote a culture of peace. In this respect, my country's Olympic Committee

prides itself on being involved in the mobilization of all international sports organizations and National Olympic Committees to undertake concrete actions at the local, national and global levels to promote and strengthen a culture of peace based on the spirit of the Olympic Truce.

Participation is not about winning medals; winning is not everything. Although competition by nature generates a degree of thirst for success, the notion of having contributed towards the building of a peaceful world far transcends any other consideration.

It is my delegation's belief that each and every athlete, successful or otherwise, can look at his or her participation with the satisfaction of having contributed to the creation of a better world. In conclusion, my delegation would like to express the wish that the journey of the Olympic flame may serve as a beacon for the human race in its quest for good will and peace.

Ms. Crowley (Australia): Australia is pleased to support the draft resolution and its principal call to all Member States to build a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal and by putting the Olympic Truce into effect during the period of the Games.

It is sobering to note right now that there are many places of conflict around the world where the principles being expressed in this draft resolution have no opportunity to be effective. Equally importantly, we support the draft resolution's affirmation of the principles of international friendship and cooperation, and the important role the Olympics, and sport more broadly, can play in helping to foster healthy, productive and peaceful communities beyond the limits of the Olympic Games.

Australia is an active and committed member of the Olympic movement. We are one of only two nations to have competed in every modern summer Olympiad. We have also proudly played host to the Summer Olympic Games twice: in Melbourne in 1956, and in Sydney in 2000.

Growing up in Melbourne in the 1950s, I well remember the pride and excitement our city and nation felt in hosting the XIV Olympic Games. In many respects, those Games helped bring the world to Australia and Australia to the world — important at a time when we had been accepting migrants from many nations. Those Olympics were an important event in our nation's life, and a peaceful event in a hard year. The Melbourne Games came to be known as the "friendly Games", due to the inspiration of a young Chinese man — a student, I think — who wrote to the Organizing Committee suggesting that athletes walk together under the flag of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the closing ceremony, as a symbol and example of international good will. That practice has become a part of all the Games since, and it continues.

Similarly, we Australians took great pride in the success of the XXVII Games in Sydney in 2000 — in terms not only of numbers, but of the many memorable moments: South Korea and North Korea entering the stadium under one banner in the opening ceremony to the roar of support from 110,000 spectators; four athletes from East Timor participating for the first time under the Olympic flag; Cathy Freeman, an aboriginal Australian, lighting the torch to start the Games.

The 2000 Games also witnessed the largest participation of volunteers in Olympic history. Many of those volunteers stayed on to assist with the subsequent Paralympic Games. Their involvement, just as much as that of the athletes and officials, best captured the Olympic spirit of good will, understanding and friendship, and certainly the spirit of Australia. Our volunteers also had a great sense of humour, and left people laughing, even if they did not quite understand Australian humour. Many objective assessments claim that the Australian Olympics in Sydney in 2000 were the best Games ever.

The Olympics are very important for other reasons. First, the Games are a major exercise in building capacity for the host country, from physical infrastructure to broad cultural activities. Secondly, people come from around the world to see sporting excellence and, at the same time, participate in the host country's society, activities and culture. The Olympic ideals must necessarily extend to cover all these opportunities. Many have commented, as I said earlier, that Australia did this brilliantly, from the opening to the closing ceremony. Australia smiled and Sydney sparkled.

A third point relates to the way the Olympic Games are reported. Television now provides the main coverage, and it is disappointing to learn that many nations give small or uneven coverage to the Games, sometimes featuring only their own athletes. The

Olympics are about international excellence rather than nationality, and this draft resolution reflects that.

I would like to speak briefly about other important aspects of this draft resolution: its affirmation of some of the underlying principles that the United Nations and the international Olympic movement share, and the role that sports can play in helping to build stronger communities — for example through youth education and exchange.

Australia has a long commitment to international sports development programmes through partnerships with Governments, sporting agencies and the IOC. Many of these programmes have received special recognition from the IOC and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

We have been particularly active in assisting countries in the Asia-Pacific region with sports development programmes. The focus of these activities has been on capacity-building in the areas of physical education, youth development and sports management. We see tremendous scope for the IOC to expand its work in these areas, and to find new ways to complement the activities of the United Nations and, indeed, Member State Governments, in the areas of health, development and education.

Australia has recognized the importance of providing opportunity for young people, which allows the growth of decision-making, confidence-building and capacity to learn, as well as physical skills development. Our programmes are directed towards achieving wide community participation as well as excellence in elite athletes.

While United Nations principles and activities are well reflected in this draft resolution, it is very important that the opportunities presented by the Olympic Games themselves be used to put these principles into practice — for example, with regard to non-discrimination in bringing sporting opportunity to women as well as men. We can note that Olympic villages have become places where lasting friendships are built and no one is discriminated against because of race or religion.

The Olympics are a young people's forum par excellence. Their skills, training, hard work and dedication, their sacrifices for their sport, their pride in representing their nation, their coping with disappointment, their celebrating of other contestants are some of the vital ingredients in this draft resolution. We who are older, we whom age is wearying, must learn from our young people and provide them with the necessary support. They are the future, and we must accept the challenge of this draft resolution to leave them a better world.

Mr. Musambachime (Zambia): On behalf of the member States of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), I have the honour to speak on agenda item 23, entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal".

When the International Olympic Committee was faced with political problems and launched its appeal in 1992 for an Olympic Truce, requesting support from the Member States of the United Nations and political entities, the Organization of African Unity was among the first to respond to the appeal. That was supported by the fifty-eighth ordinary session of the OAU Council of Ministers, held in June 1993, in Cairo, Egypt, and was endorsed by the Summit of Heads of State and Government.

Furthermore, in that connection, Egypt, in its capacity as the Chair of the OAU for the year 1993, introduced two draft resolutions in the General Assembly, on 25 October 1993. The first was on the Olympic Truce. The other was on the proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of Sport and the Olympic Ideal, in commemoration of the centenary of the International Olympic Committee, which was founded in 1894. The fact that those draft resolutions were sponsored by 121 Member States was an indication of the overwhelming support the Olympics enjoyed from the international community. I am delighted to express once again, on behalf of the African countries, our support for the Olympic Truce.

As the Assembly may recall, the Millennium Summit of the heads of State and Government, held in New York in September 2000, included in its final Declaration the following paragraph:

> "We urge Member States to observe the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively, now and in the future, and to support the International Olympic Committee in its efforts to promote peace and human understanding through sport and the Olympic Ideal." (*resolution 55/2, para. 10*)

The International Olympic Committee has also cooperated very effectively with the General Assembly by organizing round tables for the National Olympic Committees whose countries were, or are still, in conflict situations in Africa, in the framework of the International Year of the Culture of Peace. Zambia was among the countries represented at the World Conference on Olympic and Sport Volunteerism, organized by the International Olympic Committee only last month in New York in the framework of the International Year of Volunteers.

Since 1993, the General Assembly has adopted by consensus three additional resolutions on the Olympic Truce, introduced by the countries hosting the Olympic Games. As a matter of fact, the resolution introduced by Australia and adopted in 1999 had 180 sponsors, a record in the Assembly's history.

It is therefore against that background that I request that this draft resolution on the Olympic Truce, introduced by the United States of America as the host of the Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City in February 2002, be adopted by consensus.

I believe that it is our duty to promote peace and human understanding for the well-being of society by encouraging observance of the Olympic Truce. This is in conformity with past resolutions of the General Assembly to pursue the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Finally, I would like to commend the International Olympic Committee on its efforts to mobilize the youth of the world in the cause of peace.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.47.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors: Bahrain, Canada, Comoros, India, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritius, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Suriname, Thailand and the United Kingdom.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/56/L.47?

Draft resolution A/56/L.47 was adopted (resolution 56/75).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 23.

Agenda item 35 (*continued*)

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/56/499 and A/56/611)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.46)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Benin to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.46.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, draft resolution A/56/L.46 under agenda item 35, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

The Assembly will recall that from 4 to 6 December 2000, the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies was held in Cotonou, Benin. A total of 111 Government delegations attended, along with about 50 non-governmental organizations. The fact that the Conference was so well attended is clear evidence of the interest that States attach to democracy and to its consolidation, and attests also to the aspiration of all peoples to an international order that is based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the promotion of the rule of law, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, and social progress.

Bearing in mind that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, development and democracy are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, draft resolution A/56/L.46 encourages Member States to identify all possible steps to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies and calls on the Secretary-General to examine options for strengthening the efforts of Member States to consolidate democracy, including the designation of a focal point.

The sponsors of the draft resolution also commend the Republic of Mongolia for its decision to

host the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in 2003. We would also like to note that Yemen has stated its intention to host one of the conferences on new or restored democracies.

The draft resolution before us is the outcome of constructive and fruitful negotiations. That is why I should like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to all of those delegations that, in a positive and constructive manner, helped in its elaboration. The draft resolution was later sponsored by 114 delegations.

Since draft resolution A/56/L.46 was issued, the following States have stated that they wish to become sponsors: Afghanistan, Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, El Salvador, the Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), the Netherlands, the Niger, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, the Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, the Seychelles, Slovakia, Sweden, Thailand, the former Republic of Macedonia, the United Kingdom and the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

Since there are so many sponsors, I am convinced that draft resolution A/56/L.46 will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. De Loecker (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Area country belonging to the European Economic Area — Iceland — align themselves with this statement.

May I at the outset reiterate the European Union's warmest congratulations to the Secretary-General and to the United Nations on having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. We listened very attentively to the address by the Secretary-General on the occasion of the official awards ceremony for this prestigious Prize, which was held in Oslo yesterday. Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that the promotion of democracy was one of the priorities that should characterize the work of the United Nations at the beginning of this millennium. The European Union fully shares that vision and will give its complete support to the Secretary-General in its achievement.

There have thus far been four meetings of the International Conference on New or Restored Democracies. The fourth was held last year in Cotonou, Benin — the first Conference of its kind to be hosted on the African continent. It was also the first time that all of the States Members of the United Nations had been invited to the Conference. The Cotonou Conference showed that there is growing support for strengthening democracy in all parts of the world. Those who participated in the Conference reaffirmed that the will of the people is the basis for the authority of Governments and that this will must be expressed in the form of free, fair, pluralistic, orderly and transparent elections. The participants also condemned all anti-democratic forms of acceding to, and staying in, power. Moreover, they recognized that development and the eradication of poverty were factors that promoted and preserved the development of democracy.

The Cotonou Declaration, adopted at the end of the Conference, contains recommendations, including the designation by the Secretary-General of a coordination focal point within the United Nations system. The purpose of this focal point will be to support the efforts of Member States to consolidate democracy and assist the mechanism for follow-up of the Fourth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies. Given its universal scope and its experience, and through its multifaceted programmes and activities, the United Nations can play a major part in promoting democracy. It is for this reason that the European Union is supporting such an initiative.

Democracy is not only a universally recognized ideal and objective but also a fundamental right of citizens. The process of democracy is not limited to the holding of elections. Any democratic system must also offer the people — men and women equally — the possibility of participating fully and effectively in all aspects of society. The strengthening of civil society is an integral part of democracy.

Democracy is first and foremost the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as enshrined in international instruments. Tolerance and respect of

diversity, the fight against all forms of discrimination, and equality between men and women are also fundamental elements of democracy.

Democracy and the rule of law are inseparable. Measures that foster the creation of the rule of law — such as by promoting good governance; adopting and applying laws, procedures and mechanisms that guarantee representation and accountability and that protect individuals and groups of individuals from arbitrariness and injustice; guaranteeing an independent judiciary; and training State officials — are extremely important factors in bolstering and consolidating democracy.

Democracy is undeniably linked to sustainable development. Democratization seeks to offer a wider choice to the population and helps to create a socio-economic environment that encourages development.

The European Union supports and will continue to support the efforts of States involved in the process of democratization. Consolidating democracy is one of the key objectives of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy and of the European Community's cooperation policy. Through its cooperation programmes, the European Union supports third States to assist democratization in numerous areas: the strengthening of the rule of law, in particular in the field of justice; the effective participation of the population; the strengthening of civil society; and the development of a human rights culture. Support for elections also represents a considerable share of the European Union's overall contribution towards democratization and sustainable development in third countries.

As an ever-growing number of countries commit themselves to democracy, community aid for supporting the transition also increases. The main part of the appropriations committed, nearing 180 million euros over the last five years, goes to supporting the holding and observing of elections. Since the publication of the Commission Communication on EU election assistance and observation in April 2000, European Union policy on elections has become more coherent and homogenous.

There is no pre-established and authoritative formula for democracy. There is more than one road to democracy; each country will get there via its own route and at its own pace. That does not mean, however, that States cannot learn from the experience of others. The United Nations continues to be the forum specially suited to exchanging information and best practices on the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

A democratic culture is the best safeguard against conflicts and terrorism, as it guarantees the peaceful and equitable settlement of disputes. Over the last decade, an increasing number of countries across the globe have adopted a democratic system. Even if some have abruptly reverted to autocracy or been plunged into civil or regional conflicts, we are optimistic, since countries in which the representatives of the people derive their authority from free, democratic and pluralistic elections are now in the majority in the world.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Bangladesh attaches particular importance to this agenda item, for we believe that the United Nations can indeed play an effective role in the global democratization process. It can also assist in promoting and strengthening democracies across the globe. I wish to place on record our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/56/499. It provides a comprehensive overview of the efforts made by the United Nations system in this field.

My delegation commends the Governments of the Philippines, Nicaragua, Romania and Benin for organizing the last four International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies. The occasions provided unique opportunities for participating countries to exchange their views and experiences in the process of democratization. Over the years, this process has brought together countries from all continents; their traditions are varied, as are their quests for a democratic world. The Conference in Cotonou was the largest demonstration to date of the widening global trend towards strengthening and promoting the democratization process.

It is true that no system of governance can claim perfection, yet democracy is widely accepted as the best form of governance that has ever been known. Democracy upholds the rule of law, ensures respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, makes Governments accountable to people and renders decision-making transparent. For us in Bangladesh, the experience of the past and the realities of the present demonstrate quite clearly that there is no alternative to

democracy if the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are to be maintained.

Democratization is a process of building democratic institutions that ensures good governance and the rule of law and respects human rights and political openness. Democracy requires the effective functioning of democratic institutions with accountability and transparency. The rule of law is obviously the most essential element of democracy. It protects individuals or groups against arbitrary behaviour, injustice or oppression by the State or other actors. However, the importance of a strong civil society and a human rights culture cannot be overemphasized in the consolidation of democracy. It is encouraging to note that the United Nations is playing an increasingly robust role in the area of governance and democratization.

Democracy and development are inseparable in the context of the present-day world. We believe that, without democracy, countries cannot achieve sustainable development. It is democratization that can help States effectively to address the problems and potentials of development in the new century. The United Nations can play a major proactive role in pushing ahead this process through its multifaceted programmes and activities.

There is, as we all know, no single uniform guaranteed model of democracy. Democratic institutions must be evolved from the inherent values of any particular society. They must reflect the culture, history and political experience of the people. On the other hand, the power of public authorities must be based on the support of the people expressed freely in periodic elections, without intimidation and conducted by universal suffrage. However, the orderly conduct of elections cannot mark the end of the process. A democratic system must also provide opportunities for people to participate fully in all aspects of their socio-political life. This explains the need to strengthen the democratic instruments that allow people to participate in shaping this societal consensus. The United Nations has a specific role to play in simultaneously promoting these principles and supporting the processes of democracy.

My delegation considers the promotion of democratic governance to be one of the most important long-term strategies for the prevention of armed conflict. A democracy that is rooted in a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity is the best safeguard against war and terrorism. Social exclusion, intolerance and unequal access to resources are often at the root of armed conflicts. We are happy to see that this issue received special attention at the Fourth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies. We agree with the Secretary-General's recommendation that peace be supported through social development, the emancipation of women and improvement in the flow of trade and financial resources to the developing countries. It is encouraging to note that democratization and good governance figure prominently among the concerns of development agencies.

We recognize poverty as the main obstacle to the consolidation of democracy. Where extreme poverty pervades society, there cannot be stability or development; it undermines the sustenance of democracy. That is the key problem many new democracies confront today. Their efforts to alleviate poverty and foster development are severely constrained as the result of huge external debts. Donor countries should — indeed, must — take initiatives to relieve such debt burdens and thus consolidate these fledgling democracies.

Democratization has been a rewarding experience for us in Bangladesh. Our Government has made serious and sincere efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and promote good governance, and our people have always supported us in these efforts. We have put in place a non-party caretaker Government to conduct national elections in a free, fair and impartial manner. This caretaker Government, unique in the world, assumes the responsibilities for holding parliamentary elections on the completion of the normal tenure of an elected Government. Already, three successive transfers of power have taken place under this system. The present Government, led by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, was voted into office through such an election in October this year. The elections were a celebration of Bangladesh's democratic values.

Bangladesh is seriously engaged in the decentralization of power to local bodies, with a view to bringing democracy to the grass-roots level. We are also encouraging increased participation of women in various decision-making bodies. Efforts aimed at gender mainstreaming through microcredit and informal education have helped empower women.

These tools of societal transformation have met with successes for all the world to see. This has also resulted in the election of a number of women parliamentarians. Women's representation in government bodies has expanded.

We believe in the right to development within the human rights regime. Therefore, an independent Commission on Human Rights is to be established in Bangladesh. The Government has also taken the initiative to create the Office of the Ombudsman to ensure transparency and accountability in the Government. In the context of social development, education and health care have received priority attention. The role and involvement of civil society have been extensive in Bangladesh's development and democratization efforts. However, we recognize that much more remains to be done.

Bangladesh is persuaded that the United Nations provides an ideal forum for Member States to work together in creating a genuine democratic culture. Support from the United Nations provides encouragement to societies striving to build a durable democratic system, often under very difficult circumstances. We strongly recommend that the world body improve its capacity to respond effectively to the requests of Member States for assistance in their democratization efforts. The Cotonou Declaration has provided us with a solid basis in this regard. It inspires hope in us and fills us with confidence.

Ms. Kang Kyung-wha (Republic of Korea): I have the honour of delivering the following statement on behalf of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea.

> "I would like to begin by extending my delegation's deep appreciation to the Government of Benin for its excellent leadership in hosting the Cotonou Conference as well as in its follow-up. I would also like to commend the Secretary-General for his thoughtful observations in the report contained in document A/56/499.
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> "The spread of democracy since the end of the cold war has been a defining trend of our times. During the last decade alone, numerous democratic Governments have been established around the world. Civil strife and regional conflicts still dominate the headlines, and the challenges are daunting as we try to consolidate democracy and its values around the world. Still, all things considered, we can state with confidence that the move towards democratization has taken firm root as the universal norm and practice at both the national and global levels.
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> "The United Nations has contributed greatly to the process of the unfolding of democratization in many countries with its provision of technical assistance in elections as well as its advocacy of democratic values, the rule of law and human rights. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is allocating half of its resources to programmes in the area of good governance. Indeed, the task of helping countries to strengthen democratic institutions and good governance has become an indispensable part of the work of the United Nations system.
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> "This point is incorporated fully in the Millennium Declaration, in particular chapter V, on human rights, democracy and good governance. All Member States should support the activities of the United Nations to facilitate democratization in many corners of the world while striving to strengthen their own capacities in adhering to the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights.
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> "My delegation subscribes fully to the view that democracy, development, peace and human rights are fundamentally linked and mutually reinforcing. Both democracy and sustainable development thrive on good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Development is sustained best in a democracy that nurtures the free enterprising spirit of its citizens and upholds their human rights. Without development, on the other hand, human decency suffers, and democracies become vulnerable and may fall prey to undemocratic forces.
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> "In this regard, my delegation is in full agreement with the view of the Secretary-General that democracy, or a lack thereof, is at the root of many of today's violent conflicts, the majority of which are internal. Hence, there is a growing need to promote democratization in State-building and peace-building operations. For effective post-conflict reconstruction, lasting peace and sustainable development, democracy

issues beyond electoral assistance should be fully incorporated into peace missions.

"We are of the view that the full potential of the United Nations system to contribute to the cause of democracy can be realized when the challenges identified are met with a comprehensive and holistic approach to democracy. To begin with, the United Nations must be able to coordinate the actions of various departments and agencies within its system in order to avoid costly overlaps and make the most of its resources.

"The Cotonou Conference was the first International Conference of New or Restored Democracies to take place in Africa. The Conference, we believe, has significantly advanced efforts to promote and consolidate democracies through the sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Building on the achievements of the Manila, Managua and Bucharest Conferences, the Cotonou Conference has greatly enriched the discussion about democracy, peace, security and development.

"In this regard, we note with satisfaction the efforts undertaken to ensure the success of the Conference, particularly the initiatives taken by the United Nations system, such as the support of UNDP in the planning and organization of the Conference. We hope that the recommendations contained in the Cotonou Declaration will be implemented by the international community and the United Nations system in a methodical and comprehensive manner.

"The Republic of Korea, in an effort to contribute to the promotion and consolidation of democracy, will host the Second International Conference of the Community of Democracies in October next year. As the Assembly is aware, the First Conference, on the theme 'Towards a Community of Democracies', was held in Warsaw, Poland, in June last year with the assistance of other co-convening countries, including my Government. My delegation hopes that the Second Conference, in Seoul, will make the most of the growing international momentum in furthering efforts to solidify the foundation for democracy around the globe. Furthermore, as the Secretary-General points out in his report, we hope the complementary and mutually reinforcing nature of the two movements — the Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies — will be strengthened further in the coming years."

Mr. Sharma (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, despite the progress we have achieved so far, there is much work yet to be done. The process of democratization is a slow and winding path, prone to setbacks and sidetracking. It is therefore imperative that we approach the task with patience and in the spirit of collaboration.

Mr. Davison (United States of America): I wish to express the ongoing support of the United States for the movement to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, and in particular for the efforts of Benin, both in hosting the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies last year in Cotonou and in drawing up the draft resolution on this subject.

Over the past quarter of a century, a profound democratic revolution, grounded in the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has reshaped the world political order and helped secure global economic prosperity. Democracy ranks high among the fundamental values that have helped to create this freer, more stable and more prosperous global arena. Democracy is a truly universal system of values, but one that cannot be taken for granted. Rather, democracy is sometimes fragile; its success requires hard work every day. Democracy's powerful message has helped transform the lives of countless people in ways both large and small.

As we promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, we build a stronger, more prosperous and, ultimately, freer world. If the international community acts wisely, future historians looking back at this millennium will identify the growth and consolidation of democracy as one of the greatest achievements and most important legacies of the United Nations.

Mr. Niculescu (Romania): I have the honour to speak today on a matter of the utmost importance as regards the actions of Governments, as well as the mission of the United Nations at the beginning of this century: the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made earlier under this agenda item by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore address only a few considerations on the basis of my own country's experience and participation in the field of democratic processes and support for the consolidation of democratic institutions worldwide.

The movement of new or restored democracies has, since the first gathering in Manila 13 years ago, made a substantive and dynamic contribution to the cause of democracy and has highlighted the value of open dialogue and the sharing of experiences and best practices in assisting the efforts of States to build democratic societies. The process has evolved since then, through Conferences in Managua, Bucharest and, most recently, Cotonou, Benin, to include an increasing number of participating Governments, thus reflecting the widening commitment all over the world in recent years to embrace and advance democratic values and principles.

We believe that the declarations and plans of action adopted by the Conferences of New or Restored Democracies — reflecting, on the one hand, the universality of democratic norms and principles, and, on the other, specific approaches and needs in the area of democratization in various countries and regions of the world — create, together with the relevant resolutions and documents adopted by different United Nations bodies, a comprehensive framework for promoting democracy.

In this context, I would like to recall the resolution adopted by the General Assembly last year on promoting and consolidating democracy, which was first drafted in the context of the follow-up activities to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and was subsequently developed through dialogue among all United Nations Member States. That resolution, in our view, can make an important contribution to the efforts of States in the area of democracy and democratization.

We are sincerely convinced that this movement will continue to create momentum for actions aimed at ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and at consolidating the rule of law and good governance as fundamental components of a democratic system. In this spirit, we welcome the offer made for the hosting of the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Mongolia, and we express our readiness to contribute, on the basis of our own experience, in the preparations for that important event.

In December last year, in Cotonou, Benin, following a multifaceted debate on issues related to democracy, development and peace and security, 111 delegations adopted a Declaration expressing the renewed commitment of States to democratization goals, as well as recommendations addressed to the private sector, civil society and the United Nations system to increase their support and cooperation with a view to supporting the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

The participants in the Conference emphasized the necessity of promoting a democratic culture and ensuring a climate of tolerance and respect for diversity as being instrumental in the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts by peaceful means, through mechanisms specific to a democratic system. In the same spirit, the Cotonou Declaration vigorously condemns all forms of international terrorism and affirms the commitment of States to combat this scourge, individually and collectively.

As my Minister for Foreign Affairs, in his capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) stated, it is, indeed, the common responsibility of States to work together in order to prevent and combat acts that constitute barbaric attacks against freedom, humanity and the security of the individual and, at the same time, to uphold our democratic values, norms and achievements.

Inspired by this belief, and convinced that regional organizations have an important role to play in advancing and complementing the work of the United Nations in preventing and combating such acts, my country, Romania, while exercising the chairmanship of OSCE, worked to strengthen the specific advantage of the organization in the area of democracy-building and in consolidating its contribution and to support for the rule of law and democratic institutions and the promotion of tolerance, respect for diversity and political and cultural pluralism. Election monitoring, judicial reform, human rights education, police training, combating trafficking and promoting religious freedom are not a few areas where specific projects and programmes were carried out this year in the area of

the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

As we did in the case of corresponding draft resolutions in previous years, the Romanian delegation supports the draft resolution before us, introduced earlier by the Permanent Representative of Benin. We support the appeal contained therein to examine options for the strengthening of the United Nations support for the efforts of States to consolidate democracy, including designating a focal point to that effect.

My delegation is also looking forward to actively participating in the work of the follow-up mechanism of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, since it has an important role to play in achieving the goals set by the Conference. We believe that the directions for the future work of the follow-up mechanism, as envisaged by the Cotonou Conference and reflected in the very comprehensive report submitted to this session by the Secretary-General, are instrumental in that regard.

Mr. Roman (Philippines): May I begin by expressing my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the support by the United Nations system of efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

The Philippine delegation is gratified that the momentum towards greater democracy has continued to generate global synergy for these initiatives. Since the First International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Manila in 1988, many other initiatives by the United Nations General Assembly and other intergovernmental organizations have followed in its footsteps.

We thank and commend the Government of the Republic of Benin for its successful hosting of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000. Thirteen countries participated in the Manila Conference; it is indeed a remarkable accomplishment that the Benin Conference, after extending for the first time an invitation to all United Nations Member States, attracted 111 delegations from Africa, Asia and Latin America, 20 delegations from international organizations and 51 delegations from non-governmental organizations.

But more than the number of delegations that participated in the Benin Conference, its important contribution is embodied in the comprehensive framework for promoting democratic principles and practices contained in the Cotonou Declaration that the Conference adopted. As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report, the Cotonou Declaration

> "is an important recent addition to the increasing body of resolutions, declarations and other international political and legal materials arising from the Declaration adopted" (*A/56/499, para. 16*)

at the Manila Conference, in 1988. It is clear that democracy is gaining ground. In the last decade the number of democracies around the world has doubled.

The Cotonou Declaration will further solidify the importance of promoting and strengthening democracy in the international community. With its inviolable link with the maintenance of international peace and security, democracy — and its concomitant principle of the rule of law — is now clearly the normative goal for the United Nations.

The United Nations should continue its efforts to consolidate representative democracy and the rule of law as a system of government for all. Democratic governance fosters political pluralism and the effective participation of citizens in the process of nation-building. Democracy also enhances good governance and the ethical discharge of public duties by those who hold power. We also subscribe to the view that democracy acts as a catalytic force for sustainable development by liberating the energies and talents of all peoples. Democracy not only promotes political empowerment, it also facilitates economic development.

While the concept and practice of democracy find divergent expression based on the unique historical experiences of different peoples, its common thread is the participation of citizens in the process of governance. The Philippine delegation is thus in full agreement with the Secretary-General's view that

> "the benchmark for a sustainable democracy is the extent to which a State acts in accordance with universal and indivisible human rights: the civil and political rights, as well as the economic, social and cultural rights defined in international human rights law" (ibid., *para. 27*).

No specific country or group of countries can claim to have perfected the pursuit of democracy. Even established democracies have their weaknesses; but that should not deter our resolve to further promote and consolidate democracy in the world. We urge the United Nations to make this one of its highest priorities in the coming years.

The Philippine delegation therefore requests the Secretary-General to examine or propose options for strengthening the United Nations system's support for the efforts of Member States to consolidate democracy, including the designation of a focal point to that effect, as well as to provide assistance to the follow-up mechanism to the Benin Conference, whose role is set forth in the Declaration.

As a Government that derives its legitimacy from the will of its people, the Philippines ensures that its citizens participate in the political life of the nation. This policy emanates from the belief that the people should become stakeholders in the political, economic and social priorities of Governments in order to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development. It is thus evident that the promotion of democracy around the world is an important element of any long-term strategy of the United Nations to achieve international peace and security.

The Philippine delegation therefore fully supports the draft resolution embodied in document A/56/L.46, introduced under agenda item 35.

Mr. Krokhmal (Ukraine): Ukraine welcomes the opportunity to present its views on the important agenda item being considered today by the General Assembly, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

During the last decade alone, a growing number of countries have adopted democratic forms of government, and more people today live in democracies than ever before. Despite such encouraging trends, we are facing new challenges in promoting and consolidating democracy in the world.

The horrible terrorist crimes committed on 11 September have clearly shown how fragile and vulnerable our present-day world is. In these circumstances the international community has to demonstrate its ability to create a democratic environment in which peace and security, prosperity and sustainable development are effectively guaranteed. We are confident that the full potential of consolidated democracy will be achieved only through the joint actions of the entire international community, undertaken with a sense of common purpose and partnership.

In this regard, we welcome the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which took place at Cotonou in December 2000. We believe that the Conference contributed a great deal to what had already been achieved at Manila in 1988, Managua in 1994 and Bucharest in 1997 to develop international cooperation in this sphere, on the basis of universally accepted principles, in particular respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

I would also like, on behalf of the delegation of Ukraine, to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report submitted under this agenda item as well as to the delegation of Benin for taking the lead in elaborating draft resolution A/56/L.46, which Ukraine strongly supports. We hope that it will be adopted unanimously today and subsequently implemented in a comprehensive manner.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): As a newly restored democracy, Nepal attaches great importance to the agenda item under consideration.

All political systems are imperfect, but among them democracy has proved itself by far the best. It gives people a voice, equality and freedom, together with the possibility of becoming their own masters. The fact that numerous countries on every continent have shed authoritarianism and embraced democracy and freedom over the last decade attests cogently to the strength and popularity of the pluralistic system of governance.

We have witnessed a sea change in the political landscape during the post-cold-war period, with many nations seeing the light of freedom for the first time. But a more formidable challenge remains ahead; that is, to forge economic and social transformation in order to sustain democracy.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the iron curtain crumbled and the powerful wind of democracy and freedom swept the shores of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Today, most people on the planet

benefit from liberal democratic values and governance and enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As many countries have newly embarked on the journey towards democracy, it can be immensely useful to share their experiences and to learn from one another in order to move forward. The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Benin, was highly productive in this respect.

The transition to democracy has been worthwhile as it has empowered people and enhanced their awareness of new democracies. Yet it has also been painful for virtually all of them. Political instability and conflicts have marred those societies as their Governments try to grapple with poverty, illiteracy, disease and backwardness, which undermine democracy. Extremists and anti-social elements have also been quick to fish in troubled waters.

Nepal is a case in point. Extremists on both the left and the right, as well as groups with vested interests of all kinds, continue to threaten our 11-year-old democracy, exploiting people's vulnerabilities on account of the slow social and economic progress and lack of opportunities. The extreme right was instrumental in fomenting the trouble that culminated in the abrogation of our 18-month-long experiment with democracy in 1960.

This time, it is Maoist terrorists who have for more than five years now engaged in activities that have pushed the country into an abyss of mayhem and violence. The country has lost 2,000 lives and sustained colossal damage to property. The terrorists' demands are outrageous. The main ones include the abolition of the constitutional monarchy, the amendment of the democratic Constitution, the dissolution of the democratically elected Parliament and the provision of an interim government.

Despite this, His Majesty's Government in August this year declared a ceasefire and called on the Maoists to come to the negotiating table. The Government met most of their conditions for talks in good faith, including the release of several of their key leaders under detention and the repeal of the newly promulgated internal security law that they opposed. After three rounds of discussions, and just when the Government was eagerly waiting for the fourth, the terrorists withdrew from the ceasefire and unleashed an unprecedented rampage of terror, death and destruction.

In view of the seriousness of the situation arising out of terrorist attacks perpetrated by the Maoists in various districts — killing innocent civilians and security personnel as well as looting and destroying private property and government installations — a state of emergency has been imposed on the country, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal.

The Maoist outfit has been declared a terrorist organization, security forces have been deployed, and a new ordinance has been promulgated to bring the perpetrators of violence to justice.

Evidently, the terrorists were negotiating to buy time to re-equip and regroup themselves. Their breach of good faith has made clear that their purpose is to destroy the foundations of pluralistic polity and to nip democracy in the bud. Terror is their tool to extort resources and to force innocent people into compliance.

At a time when the United States-led coalition is waging war on international terror, Nepal is engaged in stamping out domestic terrorism. Since the imposition of a state of emergency a fortnight ago, security forces have achieved major victories, and the Maoists are on the retreat. Many hard-core terrorists have been killed in battle, and many more have been apprehended; several Maoist facilities have been destroyed; and the weapons they had looted earlier from security forces have now largely been retrieved.

Although many fundamental freedoms have been suspended, His Majesty's Government has been careful to respect civil liberties and freedom of the press, and habeas corpus provisions remain in effect. The Government's steps have received support from all major political parties and the intelligentsia, and the people are solidly behind the Government.

While the doors for further talks remain open if the Maoists can prove their serious intention to find a negotiated settlement, His Majesty's Government has moved ahead with resolve and determination to win the war on terror. But a decisive victory will continue to elude us as long as we do not defeat the poverty and ignorance that afflict our society. The Government has therefore accorded top priority to poverty reduction and to providing education, health and other basic

services in its development plans to win the hearts and minds of people through improved economic and social conditions.

Arguably, development alone might not guarantee a strengthened democracy and weakened forces of disruption, such as terrorism, but without speedy and sustainable development, democracy, human rights, justice and peace are unlikely to be achieved. The international community ought therefore to help poor new democracies like Nepal to accelerate their sustainable economic development and social progress and thus help their quest to consolidate democratic polity, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The United Nations system has been helping new and restored democracies and is eager to continue to do so, as the Secretary-General's report enunciates. While this desire deserves our unqualified appreciation, the world body has seldom been able to put money where its mouth is, because of a lack of resources. There is also an imperative to improve efficiency in the use of available limited resources at its disposal.

In sum, sustainable development and social advancement are absolutely essential to preventing a reversal in democratic governance and human rights and freedoms and to promoting international peace and security. The global community must work together to make it happen.

Before I conclude, I would like to express my delegation's support for the draft resolution that was introduced on this subject by the representative of Benin.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives my delegation great pleasure to contribute to the debate on accelerating the achievement of democracy, which confirms that the peoples of the world have understood the lessons of the past century, with its wars and tragedies based on egoistic self-interest and short-sightedness, desire for domination and the denial of the national and international rights of others.

It is quite clear that the impulse towards democracy has become an unstoppable tide that cannot be stemmed even in the developing countries, which until recently had problems and obstacles in the way of progress and of creating the future they sought to achieve. The concepts of democracy are widespread today. Human rights, intellectual and political pluralism, the rule of law, political partnership and the role of civil society have become the components of the lodestar of political life in new or restored democracies.

A decade ago, the will to the establishment of democracy in many countries was thwarted by inexperience and backwardness. But where there is a will, there is a way. The collective efforts of countries that have become democracies over the past few years to exchange expertise and coordinate their visions — through a dialogue initiated at the First International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Manila and ending with the Fourth Conference in Cotonou, and carried forward at regional conferences and symposia on democracy — are bearing fruit today. Because of such dialogue, there is a conviction that democracy is the only way to reach appropriate solutions to the political, social and economic problems faced by contemporary society on the national and international levels.

It is understood today that, despite the universality of democratic principles, there is no one model that can be used in every society. Each society should select its own path towards democracy, in accordance with its own specific characteristics and circumstances. People understand that the pace of achieving democracy is dictated by many political and economic factors arising from the particular nature of each society.

The Republic of Yemen, which made its choice in May 1990, has committed itself and its unity to democracy as the appropriate path to development. Democracy, in our view, is a way of fostering human dignity and improving standards of living. Political reform should therefore go hand in hand with programmes for social, economic and cultural development. Man does not make his daily bread through democracy and good governance, although democratic means are the only way to achieve stability and social and economic development and to effectively establish partnerships in the implementation of development programmes.

On this basis, my country is seeking diligently and simultaneously to achieve the development of its democracy and the democracy of its development. For the first time in my country's history, free and direct elections were held for the presidency of the Republic and at the local level to ensure administrative decentralization and to safeguard the common

partnership of the people in assuming the burdens of comprehensive development. My country is trying to promote democracy through partnership with other new or restored democracies. The city of Sana'a hosted representatives of 16 other countries as they drafted the Declaration of Sana'a, emphasizing and reaffirming democratic practices in our daily lives along with broad partnership of the people. We also offered to host the Fifth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, although we conceded it to Mongolia and offered to host it once it was again the turn of the Asian countries to do so.

We wish to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Government of Benin in preparing its generous hosting of the Fourth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, held in Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000, in which my country participated. By all standards, the Cotonou Declaration represents a new contribution to efforts to establish the genuine bases of democracy. Dialogue and exchanges of experience in democratic practices at the national level enrich the democratic experience and contribute to establishing a comprehensive framework for democracy.

We believe it is important to refer to the role of the United Nations, which has welcomed and supported the efforts of Governments to consolidate and promote new or restored democracies by organizing programmes, conferences and workshops in the areas of human rights, civil society, electoral assistance and free and independent mass media. In this context, we wish to express our appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General before us in document A/56/499 and to welcome his readiness to continue working to expand and consolidate democracy in all parts of the world.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm once again the importance of the role of the United Nations in promoting the path of democracy, since the Organization alone represents international legitimacy and the collective will of the peoples and States of the world.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to join the preceding speakers in expressing Mongolia's appreciation to the Secretary-General for the preparation of his report on the current agenda item.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the delegation of Benin for the preparation of the draft resolution on this item. Mongolia supports and is sponsoring the draft resolution before us, contained in document A/56/L.46.

My delegation agrees fully with the Secretary-General's statement in his Nobel lecture yesterday that one of the priorities of the United Nations in this century, besides eradicating poverty and preventing conflicts, will be to promote democracy. Today, as the General Assembly considers the issue of new or restored democracies, many of us recall the importance of the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies.

Since the First International Conference, held in Manila in 1988, democracy has emerged as a major international trend. A growing number of States have joined that trend as they have embarked on a process of democratization or have restored their democratic roots. The International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, as an open forum with the active participation of Governments, international organizations, academia and non-governmental organizations, represents a fitting assembly in which to share experiences and lessons learned as well as to explore innovative approaches to meeting the existing and emerging challenges to democracy.

The Fourth International Conference, held in Cotonou, Benin, in December last year, was attended by governmental delegations from 111 Member States and representatives of 20 international organizations and 51 non-governmental organizations. It enriched further our understanding of democracy and its links with peace, security and development; of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and of ways and means to better address the challenges of democracy. The general debate in Cotonou on national experiences in democracy, peace, security and development, and the parallel thematic debates on such issues as democracy, good governance and development, the participation of youth and women; and democracy and the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts proved to be very useful, focusing on different aspects of multidimensional concepts and phenomena pertaining to democracy.

My delegation finds paragraph 11 of the report, concerning the obstacles to the consolidation of democracy, to be quite useful, because it focuses on

both national and international factors, such as poverty and its causes, unequal access to vital resources, restrictions on democratic rights, the inequality of the markets in goods and capital, and the burden of foreign debt.

Many valuable recommendations were adopted in the Cotonou Declaration. Among the 22 recommendations, the one related to the establishment of the follow-up mechanism to the Conference deserves, in our view, special attention. My delegation also finds the recommendations to help new and restored democracies establish indicators to analyse progress made in the democratization process very useful and practical. Furthermore, the call made in the Cotonou Declaration for the designation of a focal point in the United Nations system to support the efforts of Member States should be given due consideration.

My delegation wishes to join the others in expressing our deep appreciation to the Government of Benin for its efforts with regard to the successful organization of this Conference and to the people of Benin for their hospitality.

With the establishment and strengthening of the institutions of representative democracy, Mongolia has passed from the stage of transition to democracy to that of consolidation of democracy. As in many similar cases, the biggest challenges to democratic consolidation are not political, but rather socio-economic, the main ones being poverty and slow economic development related to the difficulties of the transition to a market-oriented economy. In the light of the indissoluble links between human rights and the consolidation of democracy, an independent human rights commission has recently been established in Mongolia.

The delegation of Mongolia commends the manifold assistance provided by the United Nations system to new or restored democracies, including Mongolia, ranging from support for promoting a culture of democracy to electoral assistance and to institution- and capacity-building for democratization. In this connection, I would like to express our hope that the recently launched national programme "Good governance for human security", aimed at further implementing democratic reforms through facilitating a focus on policy, coherence and sustainability of our overall development strategy, will also receive the support and assistance of the United Nations system.

The Government of Mongolia has issued an invitation for the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in Ulaanbaatar in 2003. On behalf of my Government, I would like to express our gratitude to all Member States for accepting our invitation. The Government of Mongolia offered to host the Conference not only because it is the turn of an Asian country to do so, but also because we are committed to democracy, believe strongly in democratic rules and have a decade of experience that could be useful to others.

Mongolia has experienced significant democratic change during the past decade, including the establishment of a multiparty system and democratic institutions, the adoption of a new democratic Constitution, the holding of free and fair elections and the promotion of free and vigorous mass media. We would like to invite all Member States, the United Nations system and other international organizations to collaborate closely with us in preparing for and holding this important forum.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my pleasure to express our sincere appreciation for the Secretary-General's report on the support provided by the United Nations system to Governments in their efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

In this respect, we would like to recognize the important work carried out by the United Nations Development Programme, not only in development assistance but also in promoting democratic processes in the countries that are part of the movement of new or restored democracies. Likewise, we commend the resolute support of UNDP for the international conferences held successfully on this subject, especially the most recent of these, held in Cotonou, Benin, in December 2000.

We attach importance to this series of International Conferences, which have provided a particularly appropriate forum for the sharing of experiences among States that are committed to democracy, as well as encouraged systematic progress in democratic processes on a global scale. The Conferences, in which States have taken part, are becoming increasingly open to greater participation by all of the actors involved in those processes, including

non-governmental organizations and various members of civil society.

We the countries of Central America have pledged to develop peace, security, democracy and development in our region and, to this end, in the past two decades, despite all the obstacles that we have had to overcome, we have been promoting important advances in the area of democracy. We are determined to continue to implement the recommendations adopted at the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies, and we encourage all of the States that are participating in this movement to continue to work to build stable democracies.

The people of Central America are determined to face the future firmly resolved to continue to consolidate our democratic experience, so that the democracy that we have been building in our region can be firm, stable and lasting. Furthermore, as we are pledged to bequeath a better future to coming generations, we consider sustainable development to be a fundamental pillar that can in no way be dissociated from democratic processes.

The democratic process that our Governments have been promoting in Central America has made it possible for various sectors of civil society to be better represented and to participate more fully in decision-making. We have promoted our citizens' unrestricted enjoyment of the right to fully exercise their fundamental freedoms, and we have ensured respect for human rights. We appreciate the importance of the positive societal contribution of the communications media in promoting democratic values and in the responsible exercise of their right to freedom of expression so that, through constructive and instructive criticism, they can promote sound and transparent governance on the part of our leaders.

The democratic process cannot be separated from our historical roots and cultural values, as the promotion of democracy and tolerance must prompt us to create societies that allow us to live together peacefully, fostering unity in diversity. We are grateful for all the international cooperation that we have received in this noble endeavour, and we trust that we will continue to enjoy the resolute support of the international community for all the efforts made by the Central American region.

We should also take note of the progress made in the area of democracy throughout the hemisphere. Latin America has left autocratic regimes behind and opted for democratic governance as a driving force of development. We have worked hard to continue to implement democratic reform and, in keeping with our historical commitment, we have pledged to strengthen our democratic structures. This joint effort was in evidence last September, with the adoption, in Lima, Peru, of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which reflects the regional consensus of Latin American Governments on this subject. This important document sets out principles, norms and mechanisms aimed not only at promoting democracy, but at preserving and defending it.

The Central American region has confronted many obstacles and challenges over the years during the difficult process of democratization in our emerging democracies. The consequences of war had an enormous impact not only on the economic sector but in the social area. It has not been easy to combat the negative effects of conflict — the thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees, the migration and the poverty.

The context cannot be viewed in isolation; we must also consider the various related factors, such as the costly structural adjustments that we have been making to our economies in accordance with international financial requirements, the heavy foreign debt burden and the unequal conditions that persist in world trade, which have limited our steady development. In this respect, we call for just treatment by the international financial institutions and greater access to international capital markets, goods and services.

We believe that democracy must be closely related not only to the rule of law, but to the promotion of development in the context of an appropriate balance between individual and collective rights, so that economic models can be developed that allow equal opportunity, promote investment, generate jobs and combat poverty. It is our firm intention to continue to work tirelessly to strengthen State institutions, professionalize public services, eradicate administrative corruption, ensure transparency and efficiency in governance and bring public officials and citizens closer together. It is our duty to jealously guard the independence and autonomy of State institutions and to promote the development and the autonomy of local government. This work is closely related to the promotion of the rule of law, which provides

assurances and legal security to our citizens. We have undertaken a review of our legal statutes, making it possible for us to move towards democracy and the modernization of the State, with civil authority always prevailing over military power.

In Central America we have made great progress, not only in the process of transition — involving painstaking work in the area of pacifying, disarming and reintegrating armed groups into civil life, as well as campaigns to promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence and integration into political, social and cultural life — but also in creating awareness among our peoples about the need to develop a culture of peace, which is closely related to the promotion of civic and democratic values.

Our countries have been endeavouring to create the conditions necessary to guarantee the integration and involvement of broad sectors of our societies in national plans, through mechanisms aimed at citizen interaction and participation so as to promote dialogue among the various sectors involved. This has produced positive changes leading to the development of national consultation processes aimed at achieving governability, thereby enabling us to make progress in formulating public policy in the context of a national plan.

We believe that democracy is built through a complete process involving the participation of our citizens in social and political life. Such participation involves not only choosing national leaders, but the shaping of the form of government that best suits the citizens. We believe that only by investing in civic education to promote democratic institutions can we advance firmly towards strengthening our democratic processes. To this end, we have been including the subject of civic education in primary and secondary school curricula, and we have been developing large-scale civic campaigns to provide education at the national level about democratic values.

We are proud to reaffirm that the results of these initiatives have clearly borne fruit. They were particularly evident in the recent elections in Central America, in which the citizens expressed the desire to live in peace and tolerance, and demonstrated their great spirit of civic responsibility.

The recent presidential and legislative elections in Nicaragua and Honduras showed that enormous progress has been made in the democratic development of our countries, reflecting the positive environment prevailing in all of Central America. The growing participation of our people in these electoral processes clearly shows the enthusiasm of our citizens — mostly young people — who believe in democracy and aspire to live in peace and to move forward, united, in building a better future.

A collective spirit about the free exercise of universal suffrage has been evidenced in the fact that a large percentage of our citizens who are eligible to vote participated in the recently concluded electoral processes. In doing so they clearly said "No" to non-participation and gave a clear mandate to our leaders to continue to promote and strengthen our democratic processes.

We recognize the outstanding work that has been done by all the States actively participating in the movement of new or restored democracies. We encourage them to continue to fight tirelessly to strengthen democratic values and institutions, to promote citizen participation and to strengthen the rule of law. We are confident that, together, we will bring about enormous transformations in the century ahead that will be of great benefit to our citizens, our societies and our countries.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. Action on draft resolution A/56/L.46 will be taken at a later date.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that, as consultations are still ongoing concerning agenda item 32, entitled "Multilingualism", consideration of that item is postponed to a later date.

I should also like to bring to the attention of the Assembly the fact that the remaining two agenda items, namely, "The situation in Central America" and "Towards global partnerships", will be taken up this afternoon at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.